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WHAT'S TONIGHT?

A
CHANUKKAH
F A R C E
COMEDY
IN TWO
ACTS

By Samuel S. Grossman

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Nov.
1911

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What's Tonight?

A CHANUKKAH FARCE COMEDY IN TWO ACTS.

By SAMUEL S GROSSMAN

Copyright November 1911

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

(Characters in the order in which they appear.)

JUDAH.....*The Oldest Boy, a Poet*
MARTHA.....*The Oldest Girl*
GERTRUDE.....*A "Cry-Baby"*
SIMON.....*A "Busy Little Man"*
MRS. JACOB GREENBAUM..*Their Mother*
NORA.....*The Irish Hired Girl*
MR. JACOB GREENBAUM....*Their Father*
BESSIE.....*The Youngest of the Family*

PLACE—A room in the Greenbaum home.

TIME—The Sunday afternoon before Chanukkah.

SYNOPSIS OF CHARACTERS.

JUDAH, age about 15; a thoughtful boy, inclined to be poetical; the oldest of the Greenbaum children.

MARTHA, age about 13; a neat little school girl.

GERTRUDE, age about 9; always crying about something or other, until she finds out WHAT'S TONIGHT.

SIMON, age about 11; a comical little fellow, interested in war stories, and always pretending to be in a hurry and very busy.

NORA, an Irish servant, with a love for Jewish customs and holidays.

MR. AND MRS. GREENBAUM, parents of these children; good Jews.

BESSIE, the youngest of the family; a tot of about 6, attending Sunday school in the afternoon.

SCENE—*A room in the home of the Greenbaum family. Entrances at right and left, leading to inner room and kitchen; at back, center, leading outside. On the stage there is a table, in the center; chairs around the table, and two chairs or settees front stage, on each side; also ordinary properties, such as clock, etc., and near the back center entrance a clothes and hat hanger.*

(As the curtain rises Judah is discovered at a seat by the table. He is reading with great interest a letter in his hand.. Martha enters, and quietly takes a place behind his chair, watching him closely as she advances from the right entrance.)

Martha—

Well, well, Judah, so you are writing poetry again! Just like you! What are you trying to rhyme now?

Judah (looking up and hiding the letter)

No, no, Martha, I'm not trying to write poetry at all just now. Here is something that is dearer to us than all the rhymes I could ever write.

Martha (catching sight of the paper, joyfully)—

Oh, a letter from father! Poor father, he is always traveling to other cities on business, and is never home, except for the Jewish holidays. Let me see that letter. What does papa write?

Judah (takes the letter to himself)—

No, no! You must not see it before the rest of the children, Martha. This is a special note from father to be read only when all the children get together.

Martha—

That's strange. There must be something awfully queer in it, for he has never written like that before. You know, Judah, he usually writes only to mother. Do let me see it!

Judah—

I am sorry. The envelope says this

is for all of us children, and so you will have to wait, that's all!

Martha (begging)—

Ah, please, mayn't I see it? The rest of the children won't care, anyhow.

Judah—

O yes, Gertrude—

Martha—

Gertrude! Why, she is a such a cry-baby. All she can do is to cry. *She* won't understand what the letter means at all.

Judah—

But Simon?

Martha—

He won't care. He is such a sleepy-head about these things. All he knows is war stories and Alger books. He won't care, I'm sure.

Judah—

You mustn't think that way of them, Martha, for I'm sure they both love papa very much, and would not want to miss a single word of the letter, whether they understood or not. And how about the baby, Bessie?

Martha—

Ha, ha! You don't mean to read it to the baby, do you? Why, she is only 6 years old, and isn't home, anyhow. She's in Sunday school this afternoon, because she's too small to get up and go in the morning. Do let me see the letter, won't you, Judah?

Judah—

No, Martha, I shan't disobey father's instructions. We won't wait for the baby, but the rest *must* hear it. Calling off the stage and rising) Gertrude! Simon! Come on, everybody, I have something good here for you! *(Meanwhile puts the letter in his pocket. Turning, he sees Martha sobbing.)*

Martha (sobbing)—

You're a mean, mean brother, that's all. Every book that I have ever read that has poets in it says they're all nice to their sisters, and you—you make up a lot of poetry, and you aren't a bit nice to me—you even won't let me see the letter, so there!

Judah (turns to her and pets her)—

Come, come, Martha!. Don't you know I like you very much, as all brothers should like their sisters, and didn't I even write you a poem for your doll when she hurt the sawdust in her head? You mustn't tell me to do what mamma told me not to do, just because I'm your brother, must you?

(Here the voice of Gertrude, crying, is heard without, and both turn to the right, where the sobbing comes from.)

Martha—

No, but why don't you let me see the letter? Oh, here comes Gertrude, the Cry-Baby herself! Now you can read the letter!

(Enter Gertrude. She is sobbing and crying in one tone during all of the following scenes until otherwise mentioned, with her arm over her eyes, and her whole body convulsed.)

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo! *(Cries as she advances slowly across the stage. Judah takes a step forward and attempts to soothe her.)*

Judah—

What's the matter now, Gertrude?

Gertrude (cries harder without replying)—

Boo-hoo!

Martha—

Oh, she's always crying!

Gertrude (same action)—

Boo-hoo-boo-hoo-boo-hoo!

Martha (angrily)—

I wonder if there is anything in all the world that would make her stop crying. *(Judah, in despair, trying to calm her, motions to Martha to be quiet and sit down by the table. She does so with an unwilling air, while Judah and the still-sobbing Gertrude walk front stage.)*

Judah (petting her)—

Come, come, Gertrude, tell your big brother what's the matter. Has anyone hurt you?

Gertrude (same crying tone)—

No-o-oh. Boo-hoo-hoo!

Judah—

Or called you names?

Gertrude (same action)—

No-o-oh, boo-hoo!

Judah (impatiently)—

Well, what is the matter, then?

Gertrude (still crying very hard, and speaking in a sobbing voice)—

Boo-hoo—Last S-Sunday I went to Sunday school — boo-hoo — and the other girls knew their lessons better than I did—boo-hoo—

Judah—

Well?

Gertrude—

And that—boo-hoo—that's what made me cry—boo-hoo.

Judah (smiling)—

Too bad, indeed! You should have done your work better today; that's all.

Gertrude (still crying as before)—

I d-d-did! This morning I went to Sunday school—boo-hoo—and I knew my lessons better than they did—boo!

Martha—

Well, that's good! What of that?

Gertrude—

And that's what made me cry—boo-hoo!

Judah (turning to Martha with a disgusted air; then speaking to Gertrude, whom he leads to the seat at the front of the stage)—

What a silly little girl you are to cry over every little thing. But do stop sobbing that way *(she cries harder)* and I'll read you a letter.

Martha (at the table)—

Guess who it's from: it's really from father, from *New York!

Gertrude —

I do so want to see father! Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!

Judah (seating her)—

Here, if you'll only sit down and keep quiet for five minutes, you'll hear from father. *(She sits front stage, still sobbing, but in a lowered tone.)*

*NOTE—*For New York productions of this play the heading of the letter should be changed to some other city.*

Gertrude—

All right, I won't cry—boo-hoo!

Judah—

Now I'll start! *(He takes out the letter from his pocket and walks over to the table. As he is about to start Gertrude bursts out crying again.)*

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo—boo-hoo—boo-hoo!

Martha (jumping up from her seat in anger)—

Gertrude! Didn't you just promise not to cry?

Gertrude (same action)—

Boo-hoo—I—just reminded — myself—boo-hoo—

Martha and Judah (together)—

What?

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo — Papa said I mustn't cry when he's away—boo-hoo. He's so good to me! Boo-hoo!

Judah (wearily)—

Then why don't you ever stop?

(Gertrude is now in the seat at the front of the stage, left; Martha has risen from her position at the left of the table and is looking off at the entrance, right center. Judah, at the back of the table, is engrossed in a silent reading of the letter.)

Martha (looking off through the door at the right)—

Gracious, here comes Simon!

(Simon, a little fellow of about 11, enters by the door, R. C. He walks with an air of great dignity, abstracted in a large book, without noticing anyone in the room or looking up from his reading.. Crossing the stage completely in this manner, he passes Gertrude, left-front, while Martha and then Judah follow him with their eyes in silent amusement. Gertrude suddenly sobs out loud and Simon, scared, looks up from his book and quickly hides the volume in back of him in great surprise.)

Simon (gasping)—

My, but I almost got scared. *(Turns.)* Look at that! Everybody's here, and I didn't know it. *(With a condescending air)* Well. *(Takes up*

his book again and opens it.)

Judah (advancing a few steps)—

That must be an interesting book, I suppose?

Simon (enthusiastically)—

This book? Oh, my, it's just great!

Martha—

Look, look, Simon actually forgets to be absent-minded when he talks about his books. See how his eyes are sparkling!

Simon (quickly)—

All about heroes and great big wars, and magneriferous fightin'; an' adventures, and contests, an'—an'—and—

Judah—

Take your time when you talk, little philosopher! Are you going for a train? Sit down, be calm for a few minutes, and listen to me. I have something very interesting to tell you.

Martha (motioning Simon to the seat at right, front stage, and rapping on the table for order)—

Now, everybody silent.. Here comes a surprise! *(Simon seats himself reluctantly as directed, and makes several attempts during the ensuing scene to open up his book again.)*

Simon—

There *can't* be anything more interesting than this book. *(Tries to read.)*

Gertrude (who has all this time been sitting with her head on her arm, occasionally sobbing)—

Boo-hoo! It's a letter from Father, from New York!

Simon (putting aside book with a pompous, condescending air)—

From Father! Why, my father is a regular hero himself. Well, I'll listen for two minutes and a half, if it's from father. That's all the time I can spare, bein' a very busy man myself!

Martha—

All right, philosopher, pay attention if your time is so precious, and don't look in that book. All ready? Go ahead, Judah!

Gertrude (bursting out in tears)—

Boo-hoo—I'm ready!

Simon (taking up his book again)—

There's just two minutes and twenty seconds left of my time!

Judah—

Well, now I will start it at last, if no one will disturb me any more. This letter came last night and mother just gave it to me. It is from father.

Gertrude (bursting out again)—

Boo-hoo—

Judah (impatiently)—

Well, what's the matter now?

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo-hoo—Papa says I shouldn't cry when he's away in New York.

Simon—

It's a good thing you know that much! Now you have wasted just five more seconds. Hurry, Judah, I'm a busy man. I have no time.

(As Judah reads the following letter Martha is seated at the left of the table, while Judah stands to the right; Gertrude front left; Simon front right, sitting.)

Judah (reads)—

"New York (*fill in date*). To my darling children: Judah, the youthful poet; Martha, my pet; Gertrude, the cheerful little one"—

Gertrude (crying very hard)—

I—never cry! Boo-hoo-hoo!

Judah—

"And Simon, my little philosopher"—

Simon (with enthusiasm, swelling with pride)—

Say, isn't father a grand man, and a hero, and a—

Martha (stopping him)—

You're wasting ten seconds now!

Judah—

"And my dear baby Bessie"—

Simon (looking around the room)—

Oh, she's in Sunday school. *(Martha frowns at him for his interruptions, and he puts his hands on his lips as a silent promise.)*

Judah (continuing to read)—

"Dear children: I have not been home since the last Jewish holidays. I shall come home tonight again to

see you"—

(Simon drops his book out of great joy, jumps up, and throws his hat in the air; Martha claps hands gleefully, and Gertrude looks up without crying.)

Simon—

Hurrah for pap, hurrah for—

Martha—

Hurrah—

Judah—

Wait, wait, till I finish this. *(Reads.)* "I am very busy, and it is hard for me to come home, so I will do so on one condition. I have written to mother not to tell you what is the name of the Jewish holiday that commences tonight. I am leaving it to you, and if you can find out what's tonight without being told I will come home. If you want to see your father find out what's tonight, otherwise I can't come home. With best regards to all, I am, your loving father, Jacob Greenbaum."

(Pause. Simon, with a dejected air, cuddles up in his seat. Martha and Judah look at each other helplessly. Gertrude starts to cry again.)

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo.

Judah (impatiently)—

Well, what's the matter?

Gertrude (same action)—

I want to know—boo-hoo—what's tonight.

Martha (looking inquiringly at Judah)—

Well?

Judah (looking at Martha)—

Well?

Simon (jumping up impulsively)—

Well, watche know about that! Why don't we all get together, and find out? I'm a busy man. I didn't have any time to go to Sunday school this morning, or *I'd* know!

Martha—

We're all punished now. This morning we all got up so late that no one went to Sunday school; now no one knows what's tonight?

Judah (who has meanwhile read the letter silently)—

Here is a postscript. *(Reads.)* "Dear children, none of you must tell the other when you have discovered what's tonight, but each of you must find out for yourselves, and then wait till I come home. When I come we will all have a little surprise. Your father, as before, Jacob Greenbaum."

Simon (jumping up from his seat)—

Hurray for our "pap!" Everybody that thinks that pop is a hero an' a great man, an' a magneriferous man, raise hands. *(Doing so himself.)* Me!

Gertrude (raising her hand, sobs out)—

I too!

Martha (smiling to Judah at Simon's enthusiasm)—

Certainly we all love papa, Simon!

Simon—

Well, then, everybody in favor of father coming home tonight say I—

Me!

Gertrude (sobbing), Judah, Martha (smiling), all together—

I!

Simon (running over to the table)—

Well, I'm a very busy man, and I have no time, so you be the president, Judah, and we'll hold a meeting to write to father, as follows. *(In a hurried tone, dictates to Judah, who, at first tries to write, but soon gives it up as impossible)* "Dear Pop: We, your lovin' children, ask and request that you come home from New York at once, and we'll positively—that means for sure, Judah—find out what's tonight. Yours respectively, your lovin' childrens, Judah, and Gertrude, and Martha and Simon Greenbaum." *(With pride)* There's the thing!

Judah (who has thrown aside paper as Simon dictated at great speed)—

You foolish boy! The mails don't go on Sunday. How'll papa get our letter?

Martha (to Simon)—
That's right, Mr. Wise Man. Now what can we do?
Simon (at a loss, hangs head)—
Huh!
Gertrude (crying again)—
Boo, hoo, and I didn't see papa so long, and I so want him to come home.
Judah—
For once in your life you are right in crying. (*Gloomily*) What shall we do now?
Simon (with fresh life)—
I got an idea—a grand idea, a magneriferous idea! (*They all look up.*) Doesn't papa write he'll come home if we find out what's tonight-
Judah—
Yes!
Simon—
Well, then, all we got to do is—is—
Judah and Martha (together)—
What?
Simon—
Is, to find out what's tonight!
Martha—
Yes, that is just the question. And then how will papa know whether we know?
Simon—
O, don't worry about papa. He's a great man; he'll find out, all right. Now, then, the great question is, What's tonight? (*Speaking with the air of an orator.*)
Judah—
That's it! What's tonight?
Martha (anxiously)—
If I only knew what's tonight.
Simon—
Don't you know, Judah? What's the use of being a poet, anyhow? And you, Martha, going to high school, almost, and don't know what's tonight! I'm a busy man, an' I have no time, but if I were as big as you are—I'd know, all right! (*Sits down and begins to read again.*)
Martha (walking anxiously about the room)—
It's nearly five o'clock now; soon it will be half-past five, then six—then it will get dark— then it will be night, and papa may come and find that no one of us knows what's tonight! What will papa think of us, when he loves us so much, and always wants us to be good Jews?
Gertrude (sobbing)—
I don't know, either! Boo-hoo!
Judah—
Well, we must find out, and at once. I shall be the first to discover what's tonight! (*Striking a pose at the doorway, going out.*)
Let us each our labor start,
To find what holiday's tonight:
Let us all from here depart,
And see tonight who is most bright.
(*Exit, through door at left.*)
Simon (looks up from his book as Judah speaks and follows him with his eyes as he leaves; then tiptoes to the door mysteriously.)
Martha (who has gone over to Gertrude, front stage)—
Where are you going that way, Simon?
Simon (at the door)—
Sh! Sh! Don't stop me, I'm a busy man. Judah is a poet, but he won't get ahead of me—I'm Sherlock Holmes, the detective. (*With melodramatic gesture*) I shall come back—when I return—I shall return, when I know what's tonight! (*Exit, on tiptoe, through door 1.*)
Gertrude (bursts out in tears)—
Oo, I'm afraid!
Martha—
Of what?
Gertrude—
'Cause Simon is a detective! Boo-hoo.
Martha—
O, Gertrude, can't you ever stop crying?
Gertrude (weeping biterly)—
I'm not crying, and you think I'm a cry-baby!
Martha (bending over and petting her)—
Do listen to me, Gertrude, dear. Judah and Simon have gone out and will surely find out what's tonight! Do you want them to get ahead of us

girls? Papa likes you and me just as well as them—Come. (*Leading her out by door at right.*) Soon we'll know what's tonight before the boys will!

Martha (sobbing)—

All right!

Martha—

Hurry, someone's coming in! (*They go off.*)

(CURTAIN.)

NOTE—*If so desired, this act and the second may be played as one, as the action of the play is continuous.*

ACT TWO.

(*Enter Mrs. Greenbaum, reading a letter.*)

(*Enter Mrs. Greenbaum, reading a let-*

"To my dear wife, Mrs. Anna Greenbaum: I have just written to the children about my coming home, if they can find out what's tonight. I want to see that my children shall be good Jews, even if I am away from home. Do try to see who will find out first, and then, perhaps, we shall all have a little surprise together, if I can possibly manage to come home from my office here in New York. Your loving husband, Jacob Greenbaum." What a splendid idea that was. Now they have all gone out to work like busy little bees, to find out what's tonight. I wonder who will find it first! (*She has taken a seat by the table with her head resting on her . . hand, sunk in thought.*)

(*Enter Nora, the Irish servant, with a large tray, containing a saucer broken into eight pieces. Nora speaks in Irish dialect, and with a strong accent.*)

Nora (advancing timidly from the center entrance, with the tray held at the side, as though to hide it)—

Mrs. Greenbaum—Mrs. Greenbaum —(*raising her voice, still very timidly, as Mrs. Greenbaum, back turned, and sunk in thought, does not seem to hear her.*) Mrs. Greenbaum! (*Mrs. Greenbaum turns, and Nora nervously drops the tray of broken dishes.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum (surprised)—

Nora! Why, what's the matter?

Nora (looking on the floor)—

Faith, and Oi knew it would happen; sure and Oi knew!

Mrs. Greenbaum (rising)—

Why, Nora, what are you doing here this way? Has anything gone wrong?

Nora—

Wrong? Faith, and it's all wrong! Don't you see those broken pieces, Mrs. Greenbaum? Them's what's wrong! Sure, and that's right, them's what's wrong.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

I don't understand you, Nora, why are you making all this fuss over a broken saucer?

Nora—

Faith, I don't know how to start. (*perplexed*) You see, mistress, eh-eh-er-er-; Faith, Oi won't start from the beginning; Oi'll start from the middle! (*Folding her hands with a grand air of pride.*) How many saucers has your Nora ever broken, Mistress Greenbaum?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Why, you have been such a good worker, and such a fine girl, you're almost part of the family. But I don't understand all this?

Nora—

Well, right ye be! It's many years Oi've been with yez here. And Oi hate to leave it!

Mrs. Greenbaum (anxiously)—

You surely are not leaving now, Nora?

Nora—

There ye be, Mrs. Greenbaum, there ye be again! Why how can Oi, bein' part of the family, just like the furniture and dishes? Why faith, only the other day I says to your boy Judah, siz Oi: "Judah," siz Oi, "God bless ye," siz Oi, "If I ain't Irish and you," siz Oi, "a good Jew's son, but," siz Oi, "faith," siz Oi, "Oi say it myself," siz Oi, "there's nothing like a Jewish holiday, siz Oi, "when Mr. Greenbaum is home, and everyone o' you children," says Oi (*Mrs. Greenbaum seats herself thoughtfully; Nora stands and talks*

with great warmth.) "is proud o' havin' been born Jews," siz Oi. "Oi'm a good church woman meself," siz Oi to your son, "and Irish," siz Oi, "but Oi say," siz Oi, "there's nothing like a Jewish holiday when Mr. Greenbaum is home!"

Mrs. Greenbaum (smiling)—

I have always noticed you took great interest in our Jewish holidays, but I see there is something else on your mind. What is it, Nora? (*Persuasively*) Do tell me.

Nora—

Well, Oi will tell you. Yez know well enough, Mrs. Greenbaum, Oi never break a dish in the kitchen, do I?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Yes, you're a very good girl. Go on.

Nora—

But listen, and don't ye laugh, for it's true! Every time I do break a dish I know it's a sign.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

A sign? Of what?

Nora—

Faith, it's a sign a Jewish holiday is coming. Faith, and it's true, and ye needn't smile like that, either. Every time a saucer breaks, in comes Mr. Greenbaum, and says, "Nora, get everything ready, a Jewish holiday is coming."

Mrs. Greenbaum (smiling)—

Well, Nora?

Nora—

And lately Oi wait, and wait, and nothing happens. Just now, as Oi was in the kitchen, the saucer breaks, and into eight pieces! O, you should have seen it, and remember, Oi'm not superstitious! But no Mr. Greenbaum's acomin'! Faith, if there's no Jewish holiday acomin' now, what's the use o' staying here? It might be the devil abreakin' those dishes.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Well, well, Nora, your saucers are Jewish, even if you are Irish! Nora, a Jewish holiday is coming tonight, and you must see that you're ready for it.

Nora (hastily picking up the broken pieces and putting them on the tray)—

And is Mr. Greenbaum coming too?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

I don't know. I can't tell.

Nora (going off in great glee, sings to tune of "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?")

There will be a holiday tonight, tonight. There will be a Yomtove tonight! (*Exit merrily singing.*)

(*A noise of hurrying feet is heard all over the house. Mrs. Greenbaum rises and goes to each of the doors, looking out, and remains standing, facing the doorway at the right.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum (smiling)—

O, my! Upstairs, downstairs, everywhere, the dear little ones are running to find out what's tonight. I wonder if they have found out already?

(*Enter Judah from left, without noticing his mother. He advances slowly across the stage, holding a little notebook in his hand. Several times he takes out a pencil from his pocket, and is about to write, but replaces it again in disgust. Mrs. Greenbaum turns and watches him unnoticed.*)

Judah (aside)—

I guess there is no use trying it. I just can't do it. I have just been thinking: If I could think of a rhyme for tonight's holiday I would be able to find out what's tonight. Just my luck. Every other occasion I can make up verses by the bushel, and now, when I must do it, I can't find a rhyme!

Mrs. Greenbaum (advancing and putting her hand around his shoulder, from in back)—

Judah, my dear boy, what is worrying you so?

Judah (putting away his pencil and paper hastily)—

I can't tell you; it's a secret!

Mrs. Greenbaum (leading him over to the table, where they seat themselves, facing each other)—

Come, come, you are my favorite author, you know, and you must tell me! You want to know what's tonight, don't you?

Judah—

Yes, but that isn't the secret that's worrying me. You see, mother, besides wanting to know what's tonight I also want to make up a poem about it; the way I have done last holiday, remember, mother?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Yes. That was a good one, so everybody said. And how have you succeeded this time?

Judah—

Not at all! You see, in order to rhyme a word I have got to know what that word is!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Well, why don't you find out?

Judah—

That's just it, what's tonight?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Oh, that's what your father wants you to find out for yourself.

Judah—

But how can I?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

I shall give you a little hint. You are looking for an English word to rhyme with the name of tonight's holiday, aren't you? But when you find out the name, you won't be able to find any rhyme for it, anyhow! So now, try to see how quickly you can discover it!

Judah (going off, resumes his attempts to write)—

Well, I'l have to start all over again, and find out. Let me see: can it be Purim? (*Takes out pencil, etc., and soon replaces it, despondently.*) No: "seem" and "beam" rhyme with Purim! Can it be Succoth? No, no. "Boat" rhymes with Succoth (*same action*). Mother says there is no English word to rhyme with tonight's holiday. (*Stands perplexed at doorway.*) Then what's tonight? (*Exit Judah, center entrance.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Can it be possible that some one of my other dear children should have gotten ahead of Judah? (*Looking after him.*) He is so bright!

(*Martha enters from door at right and softly approaches Mrs. Greenbaum, taking a place behind her chair and putting her arms around Mrs. Greenbaum.*)

Martha—

O, mother, I am so worried! I do want father to come home, and I can't find out what's tonight. Do tell me, mother, won't you?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Ah, my dear Martha, your father wants you to find out yourself, you know!

Martha—

But I can't, ma.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

O yes, you can. Shall I give you a little hint? Won't you ask me any more questions if I tell you this little bit? (*Martha nods.*) Just this, and then run away.

Martha—

Ah, please do!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Reckon out how many there are in our whole family.

Martha—

And how about Nora?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

You must count Nora, too. Then you will know that there are as many days in tonight's holiday as there are persons in our family. Now run along, no more questions!

(*Martha rises, and going off, counts on her fingers.*)

Martha—

Papa, and mama, and Judah, and Simon, and Gertrude, and the baby, and Nora, and myself—that's eight. Let me see—Succoth has eight days, but then we would have had a Succoth built, and besides we just have had Succoth a couple of months ago—Passover? ! ! No that can't be, either, for then we would have had Matzoth in the house. What other holiday of eight days can it be? O, my, I'm sure the boys know all about this, and I—(*Pauses, perplexed in doorway, going out.*) Why, I can't find out what's tonight. (*Exit Martha, center entrance.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Now we'll see whether the girls can get ahead of the boys.

(*Enter Simon, from left. He is dragging a load of books almost larger than himself, piled up high in his arms, up to his chin. With an air of great importance, he throws them on the table, without at first noticing his mother, who sits at the right. Simon hastily turns the books about, opens and closes them in a great hurry, and appears to be consulting them all at once.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Goodness, Simon, where did you get all those books? What in the world are you doing?

Simon (*looks up for a moment, then resumes his research work*)—

Hello, muvver. Didn't know you were here. You see, I'm a very busy man, and I've got a lot of work to do just now, muvver!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

But, dear little philosopher, what are all those books doing here?

Simon (*creeping on top of a chair and lying over the table in an attempt to read an extraordinarily large book*)—

These? They're from papa's library. These are magneriferous, grand encyclopedias. Sh! I'm looking for something!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

What is it you are looking for?

Simon (*looking around stealthily, then descending from the chair and approaching Mrs. Greenbaum*)—

Sh! Listen! I'm the second Sherlock Holmes, the great detective; and I'm ioking for a great mystery.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

But what it it?

Simon—

I daresn't tell. Only you bein' my muvver, I'll tell you! (*In a stage-whisper*) What's tonight? !

Mrs. Greenbaum—

I knew that was your mystery. But I dare not tell you, Simon.

Simon (*coaxingly*)—

Ah, mam, please do! You know me, don't you. I'll be good for a week if you tell me!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

No, no! I shall just give you a little hint to find out!

Simon (*with a comic military air, closes his large books, salutes, and faces his mother*)—

I'm ready.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Tell me, Simon, what are the books that you always read?

Simon (*enthusiastically*)—

Me? Why I like to read all about heroes, an' great, big armies, an' battles, an' contests, an' great, big magneriferous doings, an'—

Mrs. Greenbaum (*interrupting him*)—

You seem to be so much interested in them! Of what nation are these heroes, Simon?

Simon—

What nations? I don't know! Greek and Roman, an' all the great nations, I suppose!

Mrs. Greenbaum (*reproachfully*)—

Simon! Don't you know that there is a nation that is even greater than the Greek and the Roman?

Simon—

Is there? And have they got stories of great, big heroes and brave men, too?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Why, Simon, the nation I am speaking of has had the greatest heroes in the world's history!

Simon (*warmly*)—

My, but I'd like to see one of that nation. Is it the Irish?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

How silly of you! Why, Simon, you yourself are one of that great heroic nation!

Simon (*swelling up with pride*)—

Am I? What am I?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

You are a Jew, Simon, and you must never forget it, even for a single moment. It is your nation which is the greatest that ever lived!

Simon—

Can I find out about my nation's heroes anywhere?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Yes. Go to Sunday school and Hebrew school, and you will learn all about your people and their wonderful history.

Simon (impulsively)—

Say, mom, how many times a week is Sunday school? I'd like to go every day to learn interestin' history.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

And now, Simon, I will tell you just this much more, and let you find out the rest for yourself! Tonight's holiday reminds our nation of a great Jewish hero, that fought for Jewish liberty, just as Washington fought for this country. The name of that hero is like that of one of our family. Now, think!

(Simon gathers his books from the table and starts going off with the big pile, saying as he goes)—

Simon—

Well, I'm a very busy man, but I've got to find this out, anyhow. Let me see: Moses is the hero of Passover—I know that. And Mordecai is the hero of Purim. O, no, mother told me last year that Esther was! But we haven't any Moses, or Esther, or Mordecai in our family! *(Pauses, perplexed, in doorway.)* So what's tonight.

(Exit Simon, center entrance.)

Mrs. Greenbaum (looking after Simon)—

How glad he ought to be that he is a Jew! But it is growing late, and I cannot understand why I have not heard from Mr. Greenbaum. *(The telephone bell is heard.)*

(Enter Nora, hurriedly.)

Nora—

Faith, hurry up, Mrs. Greenbaum. Sure and it's your husband!

Mrs. Greenbaum (Rising)—

My husband telephoning! I wonder what it means. *(Rushes off).*

Nora (shouting after her)—

Downstairs, mum, down stairs, where the little ones won't hear you! *(She starts to clean up the room with electric energy, humming the same tune as before.)* Well a holiday is a holiday, and Nora won't let this place look like every day before Yomtove! No, mum! *(Enter Gertrude from the right; she walks very slowly, with a long boo-hoo on her lips, one hand covering her face and the other carrying a large calendar paper. Without once looking up she sobs her way across the stage.)*

Nora—

Here's something could spoil a whole holiday. *(Going over to Gertrude and taking her hand away from her face)* Gertrude, you're not crying, are you? *(Gertrude is crying harder.)*

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo—No! boo-h—What's tonight?

Nora—

Don't ye know, child?

Gertrude—

No—boo-hoo—

Nora—

Well, I don't mind telling ye. Tonight, tonight is a holiday!

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo—But I don't know what one!

Nora—

Faith and how will ye find out?

Gertrude—

Boo-hoo—I found a calendar. But I can't read it!

Nora—

Ah, my girlie, is that all? Well *(with a learned air)* Oi'll do that little thing for ye! *Taking up the calendar and turning it upside down several times)* Let muh see! Here's today's date. And here's something I can't read, child. Why don't you read it yourself?

Gertrude—

I want you to read it—boo-hoo—because it's in Hebrew!

Nora—

Well, Oi'm Irish, but here's a letter I know. It's the first letter of tonight's holiday. You see the reason

I know it is because I never could pronounce it, though your father, Master Greenbaum, always tried to show me. It's er—er—Ch—Ch—Ch—I can't pronounce it. I can say Rosh Hasonoh (*pronounce it with comic Irish accent*) or Yom Kippur, but Oi can't say this word that has this Ch-Ch. Only Jews can say that. That's what's tonight, understand? (*Gertrude has stopped crying during this explanation, and is in deep thought. Suddenly, for the first time, her face changes its expression completely, and she smiles. Sudden sunshine seems to take hold of her, and she is a bright, cheery girl.*)

Gertrude—

O Nora, Nora, I know, I know! Now I'll be able to see papa tonight. Quick, quick, get me my coat, won't you please, with the pocketbook in it. (*Nora, in amazement, rushes about, gets coat, and helps her on.*)

Nora (*wondering*)—

Why, darling, what's come over ye? Where be ye going?

Gertrude (*merrily tripping off stage*)—

Now, that's a secret. Do promise not to tell anyone that I know what's tonight. Promise! Promise! Good-bye!

(*Gertrude rushes off center entrance, leaving Nora, thunderstruck, looking off after her.*)

Nora (*gasping*)—

Heavens! Gertrude has stopped crying!

(*Stage Note—This and the following scenes must be played in very fast succession so as to give the effect of very fast and farcical action.*)

(*Judah rushes in, in happy excitement, left entrance.*)

Judah—

Where's my coat here? (*Seeing Nora, who has stood motionless with surprise all this time*) Please, Nora, help me, won't you, please? I want my sweater, quick! (*Both rush around the room in comic haste, finally locating the coat. As Nora, in still greater astonishment, helps him on with it he feels in his pockets.*) This coat will be all right, Nora, so long as it has my purse. (*Going*) And, Nora, please help me, won't you? If any one of the children comes here don't tell them I know what's tonight! (*He rushes off center entrance.*)

Nora (*looking after him in wild amazement*)—

Well, what in the world's tonight?

(*Martha rushes in merrily, right entrance.*)

Martha—

O Nora, you're such a good, kind helper; get my coat and hat, won't you? (*Same business of rushing to do so. As she is getting her coat on*) And, O Nora, I'm going to surprise everybody—you mustn't tell them I know what's tonight, will you? I won't be long. (*Feeling in her pocket*) All right, good-bye! (*She rushes off center entrance.*)

(*Nora, still more astonished, sinks down in a chair by the table.*)

Nora—

First Gertrude, then Judah, then Martha, and gracious! Here's Simon! (*Simon rushes in.*)

Simon—

I'm a very busy man, and I've got a lot of work to do, an' I'm in an awful magneriferous hurry. You're a grand Irish lady, aren't you? Help me to get my coat with the pocket book I have saved up. (*Same business of rushing around.*)

Nora (*as she helps him on*)—

For goodness sake, Simon, where be ye going?

Simon (*tripping off*)—

Sh! I'm Sherlock Holmes! It's a secret. Nobody knows what tonight is, only I. So don't you tell anybody, will you? I'm going out to surprise you all. Sh! Don't tell anyone! S'long! (*Simon rushes off center entrance.*)

Nora (*dazed*)—

Faith, Oi'm so mixed up, Oi'm afraid to tell myself!

(*Mrs. Greenbaum rushes in, all happiness and in a hurry.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Nora, Nora, where are all the children?

(*Nora stands mute; shakes head stupidly.*)

Nora (aside)—

Oi wonder if anyone is crazy?

Mrs. Greenbaum—

They were just here, weren't they? I must find them! Husband has just phoned, and I must tell the children all about it! Do help me find them, Nora! (*Exit Mrs. Greenbaum.*)

Nora—

Oh, yes, I know where to find them —not! (*Rushes off after Mrs. Greenbaum.*)

(*Re-enter Judah with a package. He advances front stage, left, looking at his package delightedly.*)

Judah—

Now, I've gotten ahead of them all! This will convince father that I know what's tonight.

(*Enter Martha with a package in her arm, central entrance. She advances to the front of the stage, right, and is so busy taking off her coat and hat that she does not notice Judah.*)

Martha—

Now I will show papa that even if I *am* a girl *I* know what's tonight better than the boys!

(*As she finishes this sentence she and Judah suddenly turn and notice each other, and each quickly hides the package in back, while they stare at each other in great embarrassment from their positions at the right and left of the front of the stage.*)

Judah (aside)—

I wonder if *she* knows, too?

Martha (aside)—

I wonder if *he* knows, too?

(*Simon rushes in center entrance and, advancing, notices the two in front. He quickly hides his package behind his back.*)

Simon (mid-stage)—

I wonder if *they* know, too? (*To the others*) Hello, Judah and Martha! (*They shift their packages uncomfortably in their efforts to hide them, as they turn to him.*) I am a very busy man, you know, but I've got a magneriferous surprise ready for you. Tonight, tonight (*he raises each hand alternately as he transfers his package from one hand to the other in back, and makes an air of an orator, with gestures, as he speaks*) I'll make you a great, grand, magneriferous speech!

Judah—

Remember, if father will come home you'll have to stop saying "magneriferous" so often.

(*Enter Mrs. Greenbaum.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

O my dear children, father just telephoned a little while ago from the railroad depot that he is coming. (*The bell rings.*) There he is now!

Simon—

Who, papa?

Judah—

Father is coming.

Martha—

Oh, let's run to meet him!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

He is here at last!

(*All rush out by the central entrance. Judah, Martha and Simon, in their hurry, drop their packages on the floor as they run out helter-skelter. Nora enters as soon as they have all left.*)

Nora (advancing from left entrance and noticing the bundles on the floor)—

Faith, here's me working and working to clean the house up, and Master Greenbaum acomin' from New York, an' faith if the floor ain't as dir-rty as ever from those little mischief makers. (*She hastily picks up the packages and throws them on the table.*) Here they are! (*Sounds of greeting, etc., heard outside.*)

(*Enter Mrs. Greenbaum, Mr. Greenbaum, Judah, Martha and Simon clinging to Mr. Greenbaum, central entrance. All gay and jolly, and all talking at once. Nora stands aside in the background.*)

Mr. Greenbaum (as they enter)—

So happy to see you all!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

We have been so anxious.

Judah—

So glad you came!

Martha—

O father, dear papa!

(*They have now advanced to the table, front stage. Mrs. Greenbaum seats herself on one side, Mr. Greenbaum on the other side, after putting down his baggage, which Simon immediately takes up and carries to a corner; then rushes right back. Judah has taken a place standing on one side of Mr. Greenbaum's chair and Martha on the other side, nearer Mrs. Greenbaum. Nora takes up the baggage and exits by right entrance. Simon, on coming up to Mr. Greenbaum's chair, offers his hand with a grand air.*)

Simon (shaking hands with his father)—

Delighted, father!

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Well, I'm so glad to see you all, my dear wife and children. I have been longing to see you since last New Year's Day.

All the Children (together)—

So were we!

Mr. Greenbaum—

But try as much as I would, I could not leave my business there. Tonight is a holiday, and I have never missed a holiday with you yet, for I know my children are good Jews—aren't you? (*Each feels for his package, which has been dropped, and, not finding it, looks around in great perplexity, trying to find the package. Mr. Greenbaum does not notice this, but continues.*) Mother has just told me through the phone about everything. Now I want to hear from you. Are you all well? Judah, those were lovely lines of poetry you sent me by mail last month; Martha, are you still as good a girl as you used to be? (*Each smiles when thus spoken to.*) Mother says yes! (*Mrs. Greenbaum smiles and nods.*) Now, Simon, how about you?

Simon—

Me? I just learned a magneriferous lot—(*catches himself*)—I mean a *whole* lot—from mother just before. Now I'm trying to be a great Jew! (*Here he observes his package on the table, and during the following each cautiously takes it again and puts it in his hand in back.*)

Mr. Greenbaum—

I am very proud of you, children. But isn't someone missing? Gertrude is not here!

Judah (aside)—

I'm afraid you wouldn't be so proud of her if you saw her cry! (*Footsteps heard.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum—

I recognize her footsteps there (*To Mr. Greenbaum*) You mustn't be angry with her, even if she does cry a little!

Martha—

Oh, yes, father. Please don't, because she's not really a *bad* girl.

Simon (aside, petulantly)—

Oh, yes, I supose she'll come in and spoil the whole party! There she goes!

(*All turn their heads in sorrowful expectation. Gertrude rushes in, cheerfully, hat and coat on, and a package in her hand. Seeing the situation, she rushes over to her father and embraces him. Astonishment on all sides.*)

Gertrude (in her father's arms)—

O father, I am so glad to see you.

Simon (taking a step backward in astonishment)—

Well, watche know about that! She never even cried! Isn't that magneriferous? (*Catching himself*) Well, that *is* magneriferous! (*aside.*)

Mr. Greenbaum—

Why, my dear little Gertrude, it makes me so glad to see you cheerful. What could have made you so?

Gertrude—

I am happy since I found out that great puzzle you sent us.

Mr. Greenbaum—

Why, what do you mean?

All the Children in One Breath—

Why, what's tonight?

Mr. Greenbaum (laughing)—

Well, well, that is so. I was so overjoyed to find you all nice and happy that I forgot all about my letter. Now we shall see who of my children is the brightest Jew! (*Rising playfully*) Now all of you get in line. (*They do so, hiding their packages behind them.*) Everybody that know's what's tonight raise the right hand!

(*Each puts up hand, showing the package.*)

Mrs. Greenbaum (at her seat)—

Wait, wait, Jacob; you have forgotten all about the baby—the youngest of the family!

Mr. Greenbaum (turning)—

True enough! Where is the dear baby Bessie?

Bessie's voice from without—

Hello, mother, I'm here. Where are you all?

Mrs. Greenbaum (calling)—

Here we are! She is just coming back from Sunday school!

(*Enter, central entrance, Bessie, a cute youngster of about six, carrying Sunday school books. Seeing her father she runs over at once.*)

Bessie—

Oh, father's here! Father's here! (*He warmly embraces her.*)

Simon—

Hoorah for the baby! Hello, Bess!

Mr. Greenbaum—

O my dear little child, where have you been?

Bessie—

O papa, I've just been to Sunday school, and we had a big entertainment, an', an' they told us what's tonight—

Mrs. Greenbaum—

How cute!

Mr. Greenbaum—

Fine. The baby knows, too! Well, what *is* tonight?

Bessie—

A great big man an' lady told us 'at tonight—

Mr. and Mrs. Greenbaum together—

Yes?

Bessie—

Was—

All together—

Well? (*Dramatic pause.*)

Bessie—

Oh—I forgot!

(*Little Bessie, embarrassed, runs over to Mrs. Greenbaum. All laugh. Meanwhile the four children have opened the bundles behind their backs.*)

Mr. Greenbaum (smiling)—

Dear, dear; well, who of you knows what's tonight?

Judah—

I!

Martha—

I!

Gertrude—

I!

Simon—

Me!

(*All at the same time exhibiting their opened packages. Judah has Chanukkah candles; Martha an eight-branch candlestick; Simon a book; Gertrude a checker box.*)

Bessie—

Oh, I know, now; I reminded myself! Tonight is—

All the five together—

C-h-a-n-u-k-k-a-h!

Mr. and Mrs. Greenbaum (applauding)

Hurrah!

Mr. Greenbaum—

Fine, my children. I'm proud of you! But how did you find out?

Judah—

Mother told me that tonight's holiday has no rhyme for it. So I thought it out and found it was Chanukkah! Then I wanted to surprise you and so I ran out and bought these candles.

Mr. Greenbaum—

Good for you!

Bessie—

O father, that which Martha has—I know what it is! It's a "Menorah;" Sunday school teacher says so!

Mr. Greenbaum (to Martha)—

And how did *you* find out?

Martha—

Mother told me tonight's holiday

was for eight days, so I thought it out, and found it was Chanukkah. So I got this eight-piece candlestick for a present.

Mr. Greenbaum—

Splendid! And you, Simon?

Simon—

Me? I looked in the big encyclopedias, and I couldn't find it. So mam told me the name of tonight's holiday hero was a relation of mine. Well, who do you think it was? Judah Maccabeus, of course! That's just like Judah Greenbaum, only not the same second name.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

And what have you there?

Simon—

Soon as I found out, and mam told me all about the Jews, I ran out and got this Jewish history. Say, it's grand, magneriferous—I mean fine!

Gertrude—

And I, father, heard Nora trying to say the word Chanukkah. It was so funny, she couldn't say it. Then I made up my mind that I wouldn't cry any more if you came home, and I bought these games to play tonight after supper.

Mr. Greenbaum—

What a change my little contest has made here! Simon will go to Sunday school and Gertrude is going to be cheerful, all because they have found out what's tonight.

(Enter Nora from right. Mr. Greenbaum shakes hands with her.)

Mr. Greenbaum—

How are you, Nora? I hope everything is well with you. By the way, Nora, a Jewish holiday is coming tonight; get everything ready!

Nora—

Faith, pleased to see ye back again, Master Greenbaum, but ye don't have to tell me that. My saucers knew when holiday is coming, and everything is ready now, if Mrs. Greenbaum has her supper ready.

**Mr. Greenbaum—*

Good! Now it's getting dark, and we must light the Chanukkah candles.

(Judah has been arranging the lights and candles, and he now gives it to Mr. Greenbaum.)

Mr. Greenbaum—

Now, all listen. I will say the prayer. *(He recites the Hebrew prayer, while all group around him, standing, as he lights the candle. If the playlet is presented on the last Sunday of Chanukkah, Mr. Greenbaum should allow each one of the eight in the cast to light one of the candles, commencing with Mrs. Greenbaum and ending with Nora.)*

**Judah (taking out a paper from his pocket, after the recitation of the prayer, and while candles are being lighted)—*

Father, I have another surprise. Here is a poem I have written for tonight as soon as I found out what it was.

Mrs. Greenbaum—

Read it for us.

All—

Ah, yes, Judah!

(Judah reads while candles are being lighted. When this is finished all take seats or stand in attention as he reads.)

1.

How beautifully burns the Chanukkah light,
As it glows in splendor, clear and bright;
The tale that is told by the flickering flame
Is the pride of the Jew, and the boast of his name.
So now this story let us hear,
Its message bears our nation cheer.

2.

After the struggle for freedom's cause
Was won by God's kind aid,
'Mid victories great for thanks they pause,

**Note—If so desired, the entire lighting of the candles, with the verses, may be omitted here, and these verses for nine children, each reciting one and all reciting the last, may be used as a separate number.*

To Him who victories made;
And in the temple, praying, find
A can of oil, of holy kind.

3.

The can of oil, in temple placed,
One day they thought would burn;
That day has passed in anxious haste,
Their steps to temple turn.
"O God," they cry in great dismay,
"What shall we do the *second* day?"

4.

Even the High Priest was amazed:
The Lord had shown His powers,
And Him upon their knees they praised—
How high the flame now towers!
Two days the lights have burned, and now a third:
Such great wonder-deeds are yet unheard!

5.

But, burning higher, ever higher,
The flame lights up the shrine;
The very air of sacred fire
Seems growing more divine.
So, swiftly pass the days—now four—
But God's light burns for evermore!

6.

For they had given limb and life,
And fought o'er field and shore;
Like heroes they had won that strife,
Their Temple to restore.
And now, though wonderful to say,
Undying lights burned that fifth day!

7.

That Power that caused the wondrous thing
For Jews when they were fighting
Was acting now, great joys to bring:
Six days the oil was lighting.
And joyous freedom all now share,
While priests work, oil to prepare.

8.

No priest remembers—no one knows,
From ancient tale or lore,
When Jews had ever struck such blows
Their temple to restore.
And as they watch each brilliant hour
They praise their God's majestic power.

9.

So thus the week went quickly round,
While all the nation wondered;
From pot of oil, by pure chance found,
They filled up half a hundred;
Restored the Temple of their God,
And dwelt, free men, on native sod.

10.

And now, burn on, O Chanukkah light,
With flame of glory, clear and bright,
And tell thy story, with flickering flame;—
'Tis the pride of the Jew, and the boast of his name.

(*As Judah finishes they all applaud him.*)

Mr. Greenbaum—

And now let us all come inside to the dining room, to see what Chanukkah cheer we will find there.

Nora (*taking the lead, proudly*)—

Yes, sir; yes, sir!

(*Nora, then Mr. and Mrs. Greenbaum, with Bessie between them, go off by the entrance at the left.*)

Judah (*going off with Martha and Gertrude*)—

I have some new surprise for you!

Martha—

A poem?

Gertrude—

I will listen to it cheerfully. (*The three go off.*)

Simon (*looking after them, then taking up the Chanukkah lamp and following them*)—

Now, we're going to have a splendid—a magneriferous time. I'm a busy man, but I'm going in now—for tonight (*pausing at doorway, lamp in hand*)—tonight is *Chanukkah!* (Exit.)

CURTAIN.

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